

# Office of Education Improvement and Innovation Newsletter

September 2013



## Director's Desk

We're sending this newsletter to you a little late this month. With school opening, we thought that you might have a bit more time after school had been in session for a couple of weeks. Look for us to return to our usual publication schedule next month.

### Personalized Learning

We all know that each and every student is different. We know that they all learn in different ways. Every teacher seeks ways to reach every student. I remember a student of mine that could only be reached when he could relate the subject matter to scuba diving—his very real passion. Since he was in my beginning Spanish class, it was a struggle to find ways to insert scuba diving into all the vocabulary and conjugation exercises that we did. But, that was all it took—one translation having to do with scuba diving and he finished the whole assignment.

Today we are looking at personalized learning. What does it mean in today's classroom? How can we make use of it in the classroom? Does a teacher really need to write up a separate plan for every student? Lots of questions and not a lot of answers at this point.

The Department of Education is beginning to focus on ways to make personalized learning real in the classroom. We will be looking for ways to hear from you about the personalized learning opportunities currently offered in local schools and some of the concerns that the concept of personalized learning may cause in the classroom.

### School Improvement Follow Up

The current School Improvement Framework (SIF) was adopted by the State Board of Education in 2005. Since then, the educational landscape has shifted and the MDE began the review and revision process in winter of 2012. The original authors as well as Great Lakes East, reviewed the SIF at that time. Great Lakes East updated the research and made recommendations.

An internal MDE group revised the SIF based on the recommendations and research from Great Lakes East. The revised SIF was reviewed by a larger MDE group and many stakeholder groups, including: Michigan Association of State and Federal Program Specialists, Middle Cities, Michigan Assessment Consortium, Michigan ASCD, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association.

Stay tuned for the next steps in the redesign of the SIF.

The original SIF contained both school and district level indicators. Through this revision, the district indicators were removed, the research on district support of schools reviewed and a new District Improvement Framework (DIF) built. This revised DIF aligns with the SIF and highlights the alignment between processes at the school and district levels.

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### Director's Desk, continued

A draft Systems Assessment at the district level has also been built and will be piloted in the field later this fall.

Following the pilot study and analysis, we will take steps to formalize the new SIF and DIF.

## Curriculum and Instruction

With the onset of the new school year, we will use our fall newsletters to provide recommendations on some of the instructional issues schools might be facing. We start off with **procedural skill and fluency in mathematics**.

Research into mathematics education over the years shows that fluency with procedural skills must be built on a foundation of conceptual understanding. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) reflect this research by providing standards that require building the conceptual knowledge first, followed by standards requiring fluency with calculations. According to [achievethecore.org](http://achievethecore.org), a CCSS resource website developed by two of the writers of the CCSS:

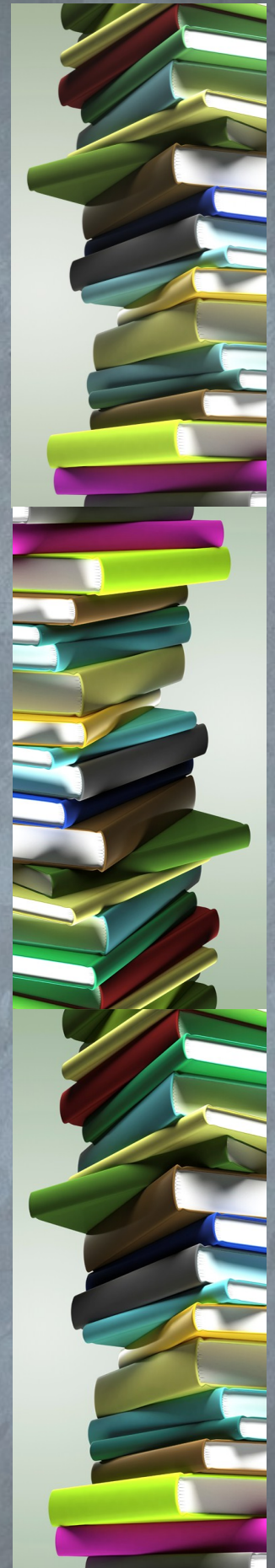
“The Standards call for speed and accuracy in calculation. Teachers structure class time and/or homework time for students to practice core functions such as single-digit multiplication so that students have access to more complex concepts and procedures.” ([http://www.achievethecore.org/files/6213/6880/2802/2-pager\\_update\\_05.16.13.pdf](http://www.achievethecore.org/files/6213/6880/2802/2-pager_update_05.16.13.pdf)).

Notice that students must have opportunities to *practice* core functions because they are foundational for more complex *concepts* and procedures. On the other hand, [EngageNY](http://engageNY.org), a CCSS resource website developed by New York State with their Race to Top funds, states:

“Students are expected to have speed and accuracy with simple calculations; teachers structure class time and/or homework time for students to memorize, through repetition, core functions.” (<http://www.engageny.org/sites/default/files/resource/attachments/common-core-shifts.pdf>).

Notice the unfortunate replacement of the word *practice* with *memorize*. We say “unfortunate” because memorizing does not require the same type of process as practice. *Practice* means repeated intentional exercises using *conceptual understanding of calculations* so often that the answers then become engrained in long-term memory. It isn’t possible for *practice* to occur before *conceptual understanding*. To *memorize*, on the other hand, suggests students simply commit facts to memory. Memorizing can occur without conceptual knowledge. As a result, far too often those facts end up in short-term memory; they remain disconnected from any conceptual knowledge; and they inhibit transfer of calculations with whole numbers to calculations with fractions, decimals, and variables.

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### *Curriculum and Instruction, continued*

**Do:** Plan time for students to practice the appropriate skills for their grade level leveraging the conceptual knowledge foundation they have.

**Don't:** Assign "mad minutes" or teach "tricks" for memorizing facts.

## **School Improvement Support**

### **African-American Young Men of Promise Initiative (AAYMPI)**

This new and innovative program began in August with a two-day event designed to introduce representatives of the participating schools to the technical support provided to them by the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation. The support consists of several components that are designed to assist the schools to radically improve their climate and culture for students and staff while significantly improving academic performance with a focus on intentional instructional strategies. A brief overview of one of the strategies is presented here and each subsequent newsletter will focus on one of the specific strategies that will be implemented and measured in the project.

The goal of the AAYMPI is to eliminate the achievement gap between African-American young men and the highest performing student group, currently Asian young men. This venture requires innovation, creativity, knowledge, and skill in several key areas. Consequently, there are seven specific foci of the project that are deemed to be required components of a successful turnaround program for African-American male students. One of the critical components is Student Voice.

Wikipedia states that "**(s)tudent voice** describes the distinct perspectives and actions of young people throughout schools focused on education. Student voice is giving students the ability to influence learning to include policies, programs, contexts and principles. (It) is the individual and collective perspective and actions of students within the context of learning and education .... and is identified in schools as both a metaphorical practice and as a pragmatic concern." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student\\_voice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_voice))

Jacquelynne Borden-Conyers, a professional facilitator with Quincy and Associates, is facilitating the AAYMPI Student Voice groups at each of the schools participating in the AAYMPI. Over the next month she will visit each of the 28 schools to assist them with identifying student participants, establishing protocols, facilitating logistical concerns, and establishing tentative instructional and/or climate conditions for the convening of the groups.

One of the primary concerns for the schools is what structures need to be put in place so that the voice of African-American young men, as the under-performers in the school, can be heard, understood, and received in a manner that informs school policies, practices, and procedures. Given that each school has its own climate, culture, staff, and operational procedures it requires that each school develop its own Student Voice process. Ms. Borden-Conyers will assist them as they develop this structure and help facilitate the conversations between the students and the adults at the schools.

The AAYMPI goal for the Student Voice groups is to provide information that can help the school see its operations from their eyes and experiences in an effort to understand what could be different that would make a difference in the lives of these young men. It is also to help the school facilitate the kinds of communication and changes that will benefit African-American young men and ultimately, all students in the schools.

For more information on the Student Voice groups and the AAYMPI contact: Theresa Saunders, Consultant, [SaundersT@michigan.gov](mailto:SaundersT@michigan.gov).



## Public School Academies (PSA)

The PSA unit is actively engaged in a number of activities right now as we just completed the first iteration of our strategic planning initiative for school boards, a collaborative effort with the Curriculum and Instruction unit to introduce the Common Core and Smarter Balance to charter schools, in addition to the normal charter contract reviews, authorizer orientations, assurance and verification visits, charter school planning grant orientations, reviewing our first round of charter planning grant applications for 2013-2014, and our monthly grant status report monitoring reviews.

One of our education consultants, Tammy Hatfield, has just been promoted to our Technical Assistance Program Manager position replacing Phillip Caldwell II who left to join the Education Achievement Authority. We are extremely grateful that Tammy has decided to reach for greater responsibility. We will be working to advertise Tammy's previous position in the very near future.

And, while we are taking care of all of these items, our unit is currently receiving a performance audit by the State Office of the Auditor General, in addition to participating in the United States Department of Education's Office of the Inspector General's audit entitled: "Nationwide Assessment of Charter and Education Management Organizations." We appreciate all of the assistance that other MDE units and offices, authorizers, and some selected individual charter schools have provided during these audit-related activities.

## Educational Technology

### Section 22i, subsection 3, Whole School Technology Transformation Pilot

Five million dollars in general fund dollars have been made available for this grant program from FY2013 State School Aid, P.A. 60. More information is available [here](#).

### Section 22k, Student Centric Grants

\$8 million in funding has been made available for this program from FY2013 State School Aid Act, P.A. 60. More information is available [here](#).

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## *Educational Technology, continued*

### Section 99h, For the Inspiration and Support of Technology (FIRST) Robotics Grants

FIRST is a national program and is available to 7-12 grade students. Three million dollars in funding for this grant program has been made available from FY2013 State School Aid, P.A. 60. More information is available [here](#).

### Title IIA Statewide Technical Assistance/Capacity Building Continuation Grant Announcement

This grant is intended to support public school districts and public school academies in developing their capacities, through professional development, to initiate, implement, sustain, and evaluate .

Innovative models of effective teaching practices that achieve "any time, any place, any way, any pace" learning. More information is available [here](#).

### Pupil Accounting Manual Update, Sections 5-O-A, 5-O-B, 5-O-C, and 5-O-D

Districts utilizing electronic delivery for instruction, i.e. distance learning in various settings, will be interested in reading the [updates in the Pupil Accounting Manual](#).



## Meemic Grants

### Book Grants

Available to purchase new books for educator classrooms, \$500 per award. Due 9/30/2013.

### Winter/Spring 2014 Project Grants

Up to \$2,500 for educational projects. Due 10/31/2013.

See [www.MeemicFoundation.com](http://www.MeemicFoundation.com) for additional information and to apply.

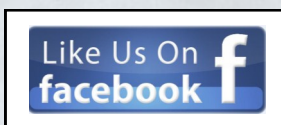


## Facebook Feature

The Facebook team had a successful visit to the Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) of St. Clair County on August 15. We would like to thank the staff and students there for their time. The video posted on our Facebook page includes background information on the program and a glimpse into a day in the life of students and teachers at VLA. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Academy of St. Clair County, visit its [webpage](#). Or learn more in the coming few weeks as we post more videos on our Facebook page.

If you would like to recommend a school or program be featured on the OEII Spotlight, you can complete this [online form](#).

Like OEII on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/#!/MDEOEII>



Students in class at the Virtual Learning Academy of St. Clair County.

## Michigan Teacher of the Year (MTOY) Nominations

The nomination window for 2014-2015 MTOY opens **October 1** and will close **November 4, 2013**. Nomination form and program details will be available at [www.michigan.gov/mtoy](http://www.michigan.gov/mtoy).



## Events/Important Dates

**10/15-11/7/13**— FIRST Robotics Grant window in MEGS+.

**11/4-11/5/13** – *AdvancEd Michigan Fall Conference, Lansing Center, Lansing*

**11/18-11/19/13** - *MDE Fall School Improvement Conference: School Improvement: Taking it to the next level—Implement, Monitor Progress, Evaluate, and Adjust, Lansing Center, Lansing*

**11/18** Pre Conference 4-7pm

**11/19** 8:30am—4 pm (Registration 7:30-8:30)

*Request to Present RFP is available on the Michigan Institute for Educational Management MIEM website at <http://www.gomiem.org/event/mde-fall-school-improvement-conference>.*

**Spring 2014**—*MDE/AdvancEd Michigan Regional School Improvement Conference Sessions*